were in Grade-I indicating satisfactory financial condition, two were in Grade-III and the remaining two were in Grade-IV signifying weakness and sickness respectively.

(d) and (e) In July, 2004, it was decided not to consider any application from UCBs for inclusion in the second schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 till a proper legislative framework is brought about and the banks were advised accordingly.

(f) No application is pending with RBI. However, The Almora Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd., Almora, *vide* its letter dated July 6, 2006, has represented to schedule it in reconsideration of the earlier decision. It has been decided to continue with the extant policy for the time being.

Insurance cover to fishermen

2637. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present status of coverage of population of the country under the insurance scheme;

(b) whether fishermen living in various parts of the country are covered under the scheme, if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) by when the insurance cover is likely to be extended to them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has reported that as on 31.03.2006 there were 2192.65 lakhs life insurance policies, in force.

(b) and (c) LIC has reported that fishermen are one of the approved vocational/occupational groups under its Janashree Bima Yojana as well as the old Social Security Group Insurance Scheme. As on 31.03.2006, it had insured 39,841 fishermen in the country.

Revamping of weaker public sector banks

2638. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to drop plans to set up authority for revamping of weak Public Sector Banks;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps are being taken to revamp weak Public Sector Banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) After initiation of reforms in early 1990s, financial performance of the banking sector in general and public sector banks in particular, has improved significantly. Balance sheet and profitability indicators *viz.* Return on Assets, Net Interest Margin, NPA, Ratios, Provisioning and Classification norms for NPAs, Capital Adequancy Ratio etc. suggest that the Indian banking sector now compares well with global benchmarks. To facilitate quick and efficient decision-making and to provide Bank Boards sufficient managerial autonomy to be able to compete internationally, Government announced an Autonomy Package in February 2005 for the public sector banks. Further, the Government has put in place a mechanism to monitor the performance of all Public Sector Banks on the basis of the 'Statement of Intent on Annual Goals' submitted by them on various performance parameters including NPAs. All public sector banks have recorded net profits for the year ended March 2006.

Exemption of income tax for tribals

2639. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether tribals of North East are exempted from Income Tax;

(b) whether this facility has not been extended to tribals of rest of the country, if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government are considering any proposal in this regard; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Section 10(26) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 provides exemption to income accruing or arising to a member of a Scheduled Tribe as defined in clause (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution, residing in the following areas from any source in the said areas or States or by way of dividend or interest on securities—

(i) any area specified in Part I or Part II of the Table appended to paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution or

(ii) in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, or

(iii) in the areas covered by notification No. TAD/R/35/50/109, dated